/36 cont'd/

476 is always maintained, and mutual assistance is their duty. Some important aspects of this are as follows:

/37/ (a) Mutual assistance in economic life. For instance, if a family in the village has a wedding ceremony or funeral service, the other families usually contribute money and rice to help reduce the burden.

(b) Mutual assistance in labor. If a family in the village needs help for heavy work, the head of the family usually calls on his [431 276] neighbor for assistance with a little tobacco as a gift. If the neighbor accepts the gift, this indicates that he is willing to offer his assistance. The head of the family usually entertains the neighbor with food and wine after the work is done.

(c) Mutual aid in matters of morale. They usually congratulate one another on festive occasions and comfort one another in grief.

[428] Among the Miao there is no larger unit of social organization than the village. However, between villages there is frequent intercourse and all kinds of mutual assistance. (Owing to their environmental circumstances, the Miao tend to be cooperative and united. For details, see Chapter IX.)

631 Since the pao-chia system was established in the Miao area, intervillage relations have been greatly changed. The basic unit is a pao, which is a subdivision of a chia. A chia is a subdivision of a t'uan. A Miao village is either under the administration of a chia or a pao. Relationships between the pao and the chia, the chia and the t'uan apparently have become extensive and complicated.

A detailed description of the pao-chia system in the Li-Miao area appears in my previous study, Report on an Investigation of the Li of Hainan Island.

421 4. The Land System and the Distribution of Wealth

The Miao own very little property. The mountains on which 427 they live are either bought or rented from the Li or from Chinese merchants (the Chinese merchants having purchased them earlier from the Li). The funds to purchase or rent the land are collected from each family in a village, each family contributing an equal

Chapter VI. Customs and Practices

1. Birth

852 Twelve days after the birth of a Miao child, his family always holds a "twelfth-day" celebration for him; after a month there is a "first-month" celebration. The family kills chickens and cook meat. They ask a Taoist priest to come to pray for him and name him. 651 The child is usually named "Ya Ta" /Ya the Elder/ or "Ya Erh" /Ya the Second/, etc. There is also a celebration of his first birthday, but the way it is celebrated is unknown to me.

2. Marriage

582 The Miao are generally betrothed when they are about twenty years old. Betrothals are either made through the decision of the 584 parents and the advice of go-betweens, or they are made after a couple have fallen in love and ask the parents for permission and the consultation of a go-between. In the latter case, the parents always respect their children's wishes. According to Miao custom, however, before the formal betrothal, the hour, day, month, and year of birth of the young couple (these are entered in the family registers) must be "compared" by someone who is able to read the almanac well [622 787] (generally a chia-ch'ang). If their horoscopes are in harmony with each other and are not contradictory to those of the parents of both families, they are formally betrothed; otherwise, they must give each other up. Therefore, even if a couple are deeply in love and the match is approved of by the parents, if, unfortunately, their horoscopes are not "harmonious," they cannot marry. Many tragedies of lovers have resulted therefrom. 583 Betrothal presents consist of [431] about 20 dollars (previously 10 dollars or less), three jars of wine, three pecks of rice, and 30 catties of pork. There are two types of marriage: one is the ch'ü-hsi, in which the betrothal presents are 583 given by the bridegroom's /47/ family; the other is the chao-chui 591 /literally, "to call a son-in-law," a marriage in which the son-in-608 law comes to live in the wife's family/ in which the betrothal presents are given by the bride's family.

/47 cont'd/

585 Before the wedding someone is invited by both families to select an auspicious day for the wedding in accordance with the hour, day, month, and year of birth of both the girl and boy. Once the date is selected, both families then begin to prepare for the wedding. If the wedding is of the ch'ü-hsi type, the bridegroom's family comes to the bride's family to go to meet the bride. Otherwise, the bridegroom is received at the home of his wife.

123 At one time, the author attended a Miao wedding ceremony of the chao-chui type. The following account was written in accordance with what I saw that day. It may help the reader to understand the usual manner in which a Miao wedding is celebrated.

585 On the wedding day, both the bride's and the bridegroom's families were very busy. All their relatives and friends gathered at their homes to offer congratulations. Cows and pigs were slaughtered. All day long, the bride's family particularly, was in a turmoil. Not until evening, however, did the principal part of the wedding ceremony begin. The bridegroom wore a long gown, a riding [292] jacket, socks, and shoes. His head was covered with a large pointed kerchief, which also covered most of his face, as if the bridegroom was very shy. He was carried out from his home on the back of a male go-between. Close behind them another man holding a wide open cloth umbrella to cover him followed step by step. They were preceded by another male go-between followed by a man who carried the wedding gifts. The wedding gifts consisted of wine and [43] tobacco leaves. The two go-betweens and the men who carried the umbrella and the wedding gifts were formally dressed in long gowns, riding jackets, socks, shoes, etc. After the bridegroom had come a few steps from out the door, the go-between at the front of the procession fired a few firecrackers and the procession paused. Not until they heard the explosion of the firecrackers set off by the bride's family did they continue to go ahead. (In this wedding, the two families happened to be close neighbors. The sound of the firecrackers could be heard from either side.) After they had walked halfway they stopped once more. In a moment two young girls sent ahead from the bride's family (called pan-niang, "bridesmaids")

[10 cont.]
585 a horse saddle to gain entrance through the gate. After the send-off party leaves, the bride's family immediately slaughters a pig or two, to carry to the groom's house as a send-off gift. That day friends and relatives float in like clouds to offer congratulations. The groom's family puts rice straw on the floor of the cow stall and spreads feasts to entertain the guests. Day or night they would not stop feasting until drunk. That night no one sleeps. The bride does not share the groom's room. The guests from the bride's family and the friends of the groom's family join in a song fest. The following day or the third day the bride returns home with her companions, and the host dispenses cash presents to all the members of the bridal party. The other guests stay on to partake of the farewell feast. After her return the bride stays with her parents for a month or fortnight,
591 and has to be welcomed back to her new home by her husband. But the girl's family would keep the son-in-law as a house guest for several days before sending the young couple away. After a short stay the bride goes back again to live with her mother, and only on New Year, at festivals and harvest times, would she accompany her husband home to stay for a few days as a guest of his family. It is only after the children are born that she lives permanently with him. One month after the birth of the first
852 child there would be a feast, and the wife's family [11] would
●431 send along some baby clothes and, in case of a wealthy family, also cows and pigs. Those who have received cash gifts from the husband's family at the wedding would now give in return baby's bedding and clothing as well as chicken and duck eggs.
[804] Friends and relatives would each carry with him a sheng [a measure equivalent to 31.6 cubic inches] of rice and a jug of wine to partake in a feast provided by the host, who would slaughter cattle or buy pork and beef from the market for the occasion.

764 2) Funeral. The funeral rituals of the various Miao-I
[755] groups in Kweichow are more or less similar. Due to their belief in spirits, they resort to wizardry for the expulsion of evil spirits in case of sickness, but they would never take any medicine with the result that nine out of ten cases of serious sickness end in death. A man who dies of old age is given funeral rites at

[182 cont.]

796 574 friends and relatives, and the younger generations pay respects to their elders (The New Year gifts for the children vary from ten to twenty cents.) When they exchange visits and greetings they [431] bring with them a couple of home-made tz'u pa (each about 1 sheng of rice), candies and refreshments as gifts. The host and hostesses must entertain the visitors with tea and wine. The tenant farmers also present similar New Year gifts to their landlords, who in return would give them pieces of cloth or other household articles. As a rule such New Year greetings do not extend beyond the twelfth day though intimate relatives may offer theirs until the fifteenth. If a relative who has kept up these New Year visits throughout the past years fails to turn up, the family will be greatly offended. The Miao-I take the New Year greetings very seriously, and hence they should not be neglected.

796 535 The Hua Miao and the Ch'ing Miao in the hsien district have a custom of flower dance. There is a fixed location for the dancing ground, called the "flower bed." The dates for flower dances are set according to schedules in various places, and are generally between the fourth and the fifteenth day of the first month. On this occasion visitors gather like clouds in great jubilation, and it is indeed the most important festival of the Hua Miao and the Ch'ing Miao throughout the year.

796 The fifteenth day of the first month is the "Small New Year" with the Hua Miao and the Ch'ing Miao. That evening they put in front of the doorway a small table, on which are placed as sacrificial offerings a bowl of rice, a piece of meat and a cup of rice wine. Burning incense and lighting candles, they would kneel down and pray: "We pray to the Buddha tonight to guide us this year smoothly to wealth and prosperity." After the prayer, the old and young, except the womenfolk, worship in turn. Then they sit down together for a feast in the hall. After dinner they have fun for the rest of the evening. The Chung-chia celebrate the "Small New Year" on the thirtieth day of the first month. Besides other delicacies at the table, [262] [769] every family makes tz'u-pa balls fried in oil, known as "eating oil balls." They make sacrifices to their ancestors in great piety.

/88 cont./

M seriously disturbed. It is gayest when Bun Ma, our Lao
832 interpreter, is visited in his camp by three or four girls together.
883 Then there is no end of ringing laughter; it wakes us up in the
123 morning and prevents us from falling asleep at night. They tease him about one of the girls, urge him to visit her because, they say, she is waiting for him, ask how the Lao make love, and so forth. Bun Ma, a slender, gracefully built Lao, feels himself very much the center of attention and declares that if they were not so dirty he would long since have made friends
M with a Meau girl. As a matter of fact, the dirtiness of the
[515] girls considerably disturbs the Lao, very much accustomed to cleanliness, though he is readily captivated by the pretty faces and the ingratiating nature of the girls. In the evening Bun Ma
M sits in the house of the chief, and the girls teach him the love
[533] songs of the Meau in their language, and even the old chief joins in and, turning toward Bun Ma with a smirk, sings in the same register as the girls and amid general laughter: 'Where do you stay so long, I am waiting for you!'"

A That purely materialistic considerations play only a
M minor role in the choice of a partner is shown by the fact that
836 prostitution is unknown among both peoples and a girl never
[548] yields to a man who is not congenial to her. To be sure, it is
[431] customary for every young man to give his beloved a silver necklace, if he can afford it, while the girl in return gives him a beautiful batik cloth which she has made herself (see the chapter, "Clothing and Ornaments"); these gifts are /Ills. 22-25 appear here on unnumbered pages/ /89/ exchanged as a matter-of-course and incidentally after the pleasures of love have been enjoyed, and no girl is going to deny herself to a young man who is unable to give her an ornament, if she likes him otherwise. A girl is never influenced in the choice of her partner by the prospect of receiving an ornament afterward.

M In contrast to my observations, Abadie (1) writes
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1. Page 167.

concerning the Meau: "Even cases of prostitution are reported, without its casting the slightest dishonor upon those concerned..."

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241 423 596 Through the labor performed on the land, it thereby passes into the possession of the head of the large /extended/ family. Every large family cultivates its land collectively; there is no distribution of the land among the individual small families of the family union. Just as a large family often cultivates several fields at the same time, it also frequently happens that several large families jointly cultivate only one large field. It depends on the number of individuals in a large family. If several large families, each with few members, jointly cultivate the soil, the land is divided into corresponding sections, each of which is tilled by one large family. Since the fields remain productive for only a short time, a later redistribution is unnecessary.

423 Wild fruits, plants, or trees belong to the person who collects or uses them.

422 [423] [596] Among the Meau only the house itself belongs to the head of the large family, whereas the furnishings are the joint property of all the occupants. This is true of the kitchen equipment, the domestic animals, saddles, bridles, and the like. On the other hand, clothing, weapons, and personal ornaments are the property of the individuals, who usually obtained these objects as gifts, for example, from the head of the large family or the partner of a love affair, and, in the case of children, from their parents, or they made them themselves, such as weapons, traps, and so forth. Similarly, the equipment that the wife has brought into the marriage, such as clothing and the dowry in general, remains her personal property.

● [431]

The Meau have no special marks of ownership; hence such distinguishing marks are used neither on personal property nor on the domestic animals of the large family.

426 The legal conditions are definite for every form of loan, whether it is money, that is, silver, or field produce, animals, etc. that is involved. Loans are granted and handed over in the presence of three witnesses. No interest has to be paid for a loan up to one year; for a longer period, regardless of whether it is paid back in two years or in ten, interest has to be paid once, amounting to one-third of the value received. For example, if a person has borrowed 21 baskets of rice, 28 baskets are